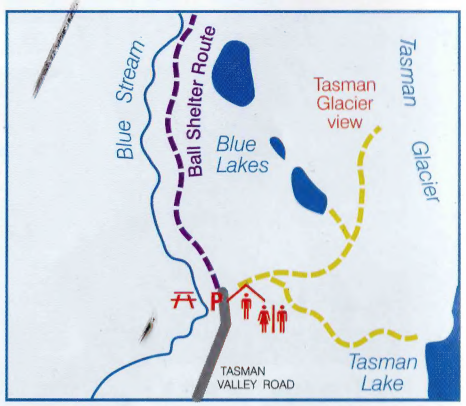
# Tasman Valley Walks

The Tasman Valley Road is a scenic 8-kilometre drive on an unsealed road to the Blue Lakes carpark and shelter.




NEW ZEALAND ENVIRONMENTAL CARE CODE

- Protect plants and animals
- Remove rubbish
- Bury toilet waste
- Keep streams and lakes clean
- Take care with fires
- Keep to the track
- Respect our cultural heritage
- Toitu te whenua *(Leave the land undisturbed)*

## Blue Lakes and Tasman Glacier View

**Time: 40 minutes return**

Start from the Blue Lakes shelter and meander up past the lakes to a viewpoint on the moraine wall. There are good views of the lower Tasman Glacier and the mountains at the head of the valley. The lakes offer good swimming in summer and can be reached by making a side trip off the main track. The Blue Lakes, originally named because of their intense blue colour, could now be more accurately described as green ponds.

Tasman Glacier

Nick Groves

## Tasman Glacier Lake

**Time: 50 minutes – 1 hour**

This trip branches off the Tasman Glacier View Track just past the Blue Lakes Shelter and leads to a viewpoint of the glacier terminal lake and the source of the Tasman River. Icebergs can be seen floating in the lake in summer, and in winter the lake freezes over.

## Ball Shelter Hut Route

**Time: 3–4 hours one way**

From the Blue Lakes carpark, follow the line of the old Ball Hut Road alongside Tasman Glacier. Ball Shelter is close to the historic Ball Hut site and offers superb views of the glacier and surrounding peaks. Take care, as the moraine wall in this area and along the road is very unstable.

Sign your intentions at the Visitor Centre if you wish to stay at the hut, and pay your fees before departing.

## General Information

The Department of Conservation Visitor Centre has displays and information on the Aoraki/Mount Cook region and a 20-minute audiovisual show. Weather forecasts, up-to-date track information and conservation merchandise, including publications and maps, are also available. There are no banks at Aoraki/Mount Cook village but EFTPOS facilities are available.

### Useful phone numbers

**Visitor Centre:** Phone (03) 435 1186
Fax (03) 435 1080
Weather (03) 435 1171

**Hermitage:** (03) 435 1809

**Hostelling International Mount Cook:** (03) 435 1820

**Alpine Guides:** (03) 435 1834

**Old Mountaineer Cafe & Bar:** (03) 435 1890

SafetyWatch
**0800 999 005**
Report any safety hazards

Tasman Lake – Brent Shears

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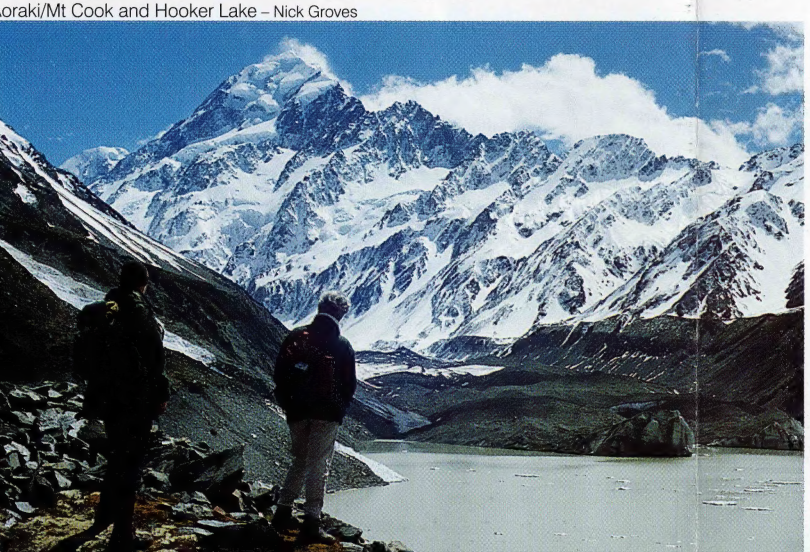
# Walks in Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park

Hooker Valley and Aoraki/Mt Cook Photo: Nick Groves

Department of Conservation
*Te Papa Atawhai*

oraki/Mt Cook and Mueller Lake – Nick Groves

oraki/Mt Cook and Hooker Lake – Nick Groves



## Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park

The purpose of this 70,111-hectare park is to preserve a magnificent and unique mountain area in its natural state for the benefit and enjoyment of all people. It encompasses 65 km of the Southern Alps and the longest glacier in New Zealand.

The nucleus of the Park was set aside as recreation reserve in 1885 and 1887, but it was not formally gazetted as a national park until 1953.

At 3754 metres, New Zealand's tallest peak is known as Aoraki by Māori. According to legend, Aoraki was a young boy in the canoe Te Waka a Aoraki, which was stranded on a reef and tilted to one side. Aoraki and his brothers climbed to the high side and sat on the wreckage. The south wind froze them and turned them into stone, creating the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana.

In 1851 Captain J. L. Stokes, sailing down the West Coast, gave the mountain its European name, Mt Cook, in honour of the English navigator Captain James Cook.

## Mountains and glaciers

The magnificent alpine scenery has been formed by a combination of uplift and erosion. Rapid mountain building on the eastern side of the Alpine Fault line began about 2 million years ago. Present uplift is about 10 mm per year. However, the erosive forces of snow, ice, water and climatic extremes, particularly during glacial periods, have kept in balance with the uplift, creating the present rugged and spectacular landscape.

The glaciers that have helped shape the Park's landscape include five major valley systems: Godley, Murchison, Tasman, Hooker and Mueller. The Tasman Glacier, clearly visible from the main highway at the entrance of the Park, is 29 km long and up to 3 km wide. Although covered with rock material in its lower reaches, the ice of the Tasman is about 600 metres deep near the Hochstetter Icefall.

## History

The first attempt to climb Mount Cook was made in 1882 by an Irishman, the Reverend W.S. Green, and two Swiss guides. Although his party climbed to within 200 metres of the top, it was not until 1894 that the summit was reached, by three New Zealanders: Tom Fyfe, Jack Clarke and George Graham. Today the Park is recognised as one of the finest mountaineering areas in the world, for both experienced and novice climbers. High-level huts are equipped with radios for climbers to use, and information on huts, fees, weather and in winter, avalanche conditions can be obtained from the Visitor Centre.

### Climate

Average rainfall: 4000mm/year
Rain days: 149/year
Hours of sunshine: 1528/year
Snow on ground: 21days/year

Kea – Nick Groves

Black Mountain Ringlet – A. Dennis

## Flora and fauna

With only small patches of silver beech left after early burnoffs, most of the native flora is found in the alpine shrublands and tussock grasslands. Over 300 species of plants are found in the Park. Among the most spectacular of these are many varieties of mountain buttercup (*Ranunculus*) and daisy/tikumu (*Celmisia*). The famed Mount Cook lily, *Ranunculus lyalli,* is the largest buttercup in the world.

About 40 species of birds are found in the Park, and perhaps the most distinctive of these is the kea, a mountain parrot well known for its mischievous antics. The only true alpine bird is the tiny rock wren/piwauwau, which survives the winter in high rock basins. However kea, falcons/kāreārea and black-backed gulls/karoro can be found soaring in higher areas.

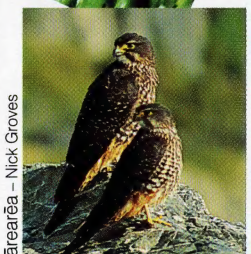
The Park is rich with invertebrate fauna, including large dragonflies, grasshoppers, distinctive moths and butterflies. A black alpine weta, known as the Mount Cook flea, is found above the snowline. The jewelled gecko lives in the region but is so secretive that it is rarely seen.

Mountain daisy – L. Bell

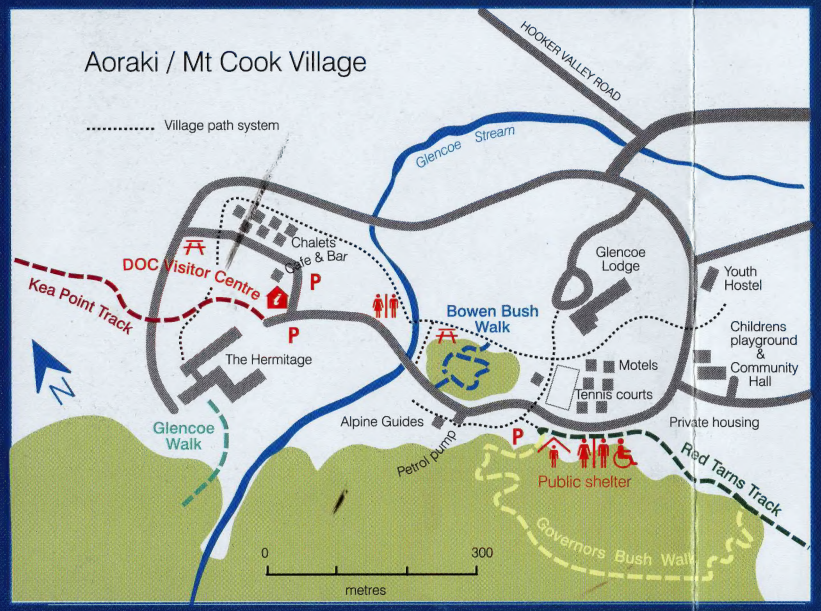
Snow tussock – W. Logeman

Snow totara – B. Ryan

ount Cook Buttercup – Photo: Brent Shears



āreārea – Nick Groves




**Te Wāhipounamu –**
*South West New Zealand*
**World Heritage Area**

South West New Zealand is one of the great wilderness areas of the Southern Hemisphere. Known to Māori as Te Wāhipounamu (the place of greenstone), the South West New Zealand World Heritage Area incorporates Aoraki/Mt Cook, Westland/Tai Poutini, Fiordland and Mount Aspiring National Parks, covering 2.6 million hectares.

World Heritage is a global concept that identifies natural and cultural sites of world significance – places so special that protecting them is of concern for all people. Some of the best examples of animals and plants once found on the ancient subcontinent Gondwana live in the World Heritage Area.

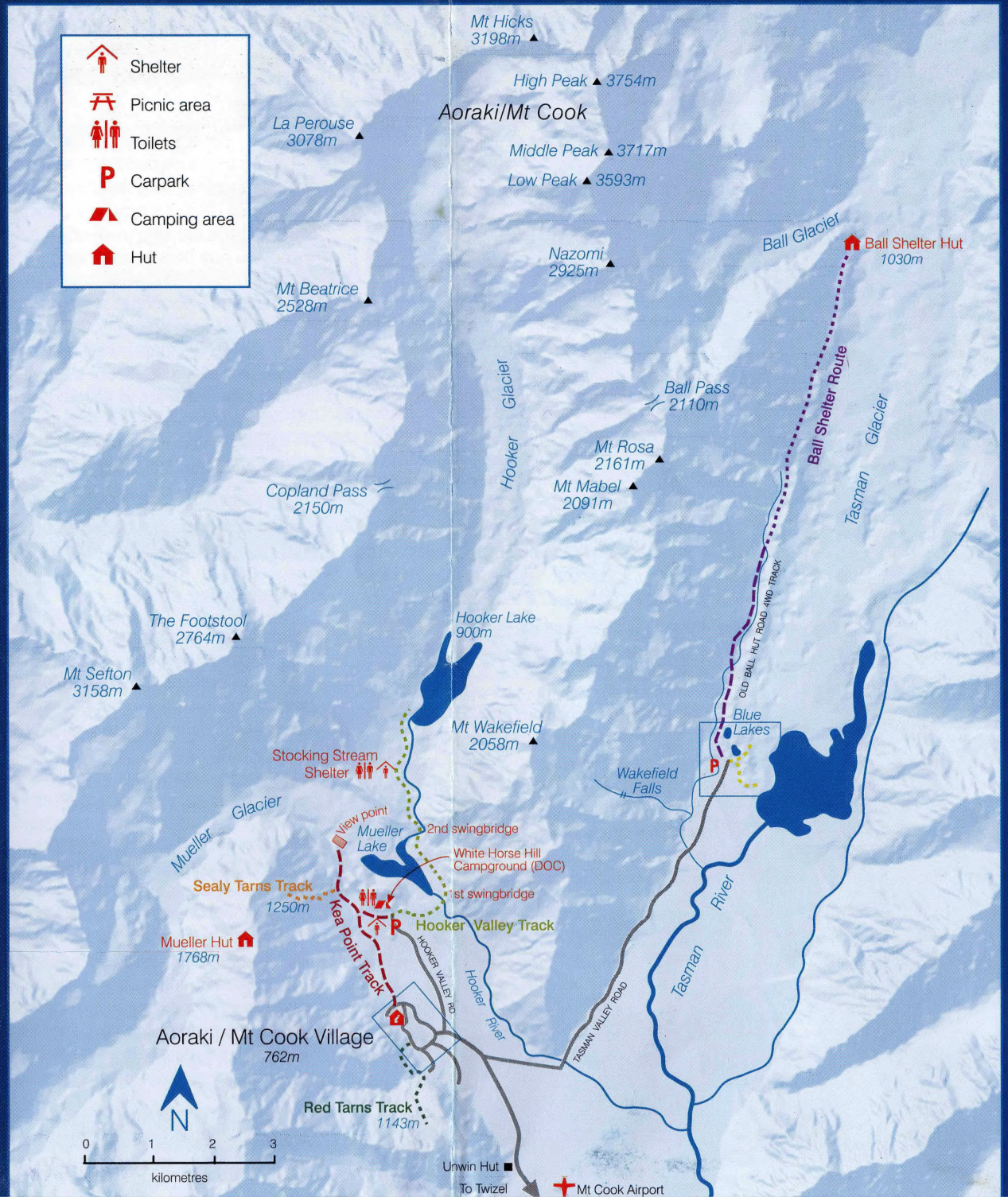
## Welcome

This pamphlet will help you to enjoy your time walking in the Park. All tracks are formed and well marked. Use the descriptions and times given here to help plan your trips. Everyone walks at a different pace, so the times given are guidelines only. Apart from the short valley walks, there is very little for the tramper who does not have climbing experience.

## What to take

Light footwear, such as running shoes, is adequate for most walks. Sturdy boots are more suitable for longer walks. Take a warm jersey or jacket, as the weather can change quickly in the mountains and even on sunny days the wind can be cold. Ultra-violet rays can be very intense at Aoraki/Mount Cook, so a hat and 15+ sunblock are essential on fine days. Consider taking something to eat and drink, and don't forget your camera.

# Walks from the village



## Symbols

**Walking track**
Easy and well formed. Suitable for people of most ages and fitness levels. Constructed to 'shoe' standard

**Tramping track**
May require skill and experience. Suitable for people of average fitness. Constructed to 'boot' standard

**Route**
Requires a high degree of skill and experience, and route-finding ability. Suitable for well-equipped trampers

**Return** means the time taken to go from the start of the track to the end and back again, or around the circuit of a loop track.

## Governors Bush Walk

**Time: 1 hour return**
This delightful bush walk begins at the public shelter and explores one of the last stands of silver beech forest in the Park. A gradual climb leads to a lookout point before the track descends and returns to the village. This popular walk offers birdlife, a good viewpoint of the mountains and shelter in poor weather.

## Bowen Bush Walk

**Time: 10 minutes return**
This easy forest walk begins across the road from Alpine Guides. The loop track wanders through totara and celery pine forest and has an alternative exit or entry towards Glencoe Lodge.

## Glencoe Walk

**Time: 30 minutes return**
Start from behind the Hermitage. The walk zigzags through totara trees with a ferny understorey, emerging at a lookout near the prominent water tanks above the Hermitage. Walkers are rewarded with a birdseye view of the village and beyond to the white ice of the Hooker Glacier and Aoraki/Mount Cook. Sunrise and sunset are good times to catch light-play on the mountains.

## Red Tarns Track

**Time: 2 hours return**
Begin at the Public Shelter and follow the path to Black Birch Stream. Cross the bridge then climb steeply to the Red Tarns. A viewpoint offers a spectacular panorama of the valley and Aoraki/Mount Cook. The tarns were named from the red pond weed that grows in them.

## Sealy Tarns Track

**Time: 3–4 hours return**
Begin as for Kea Point then branch off at the signpost to climb steeply up to the tarns. This energetic walk gives spectacular views of the Hooker Valley and the peaks of the area including Aoraki/Mount Cook. An abundance of alpine flowers in summer, and the view fom the tarns makes the effort worthwhile.

## Kea Point Walk

**Time: 2 hours return from the village, 1 hour return from the White Horse Hill carpark.**
Start from the Hermitage lawn and cross the road to the track sign (or leave from the public shelter at the campground). This walk gently winds its way through sub-alpine grasslands and scrub to the Mueller Glacier moraine wall. The track passes through landscape that was formed in 1913 when a stream cut through from the glacier to the original Hermitage site, damaging the building. The walk ends at a viewing deck that gives stunning views of Mt Sefton and Footstool, the Hooker Valley, Mueller Glacier Lake and Aoraki/Mount Cook.

## Hooker Valley Track

**Times from the village:**
**1st swingbridge: 1 1/2 hours return**
**2nd swingbridge: 2 hours return**
**Hooker Lake: 4 hours return**
Begin at the Visitor Centre or White Horse Hill camping areas. Starting from the camping area reduces the times by 45 minutes. One of the most popular walks in the Park, it leads up the Hooker Valley towards Aoraki/Mount Cook. The track passes close to the Alpine Memorial, which is a great viewpoint. Continue on to Hooker River and cross twice on swingbridges before reaching Stocking Stream Shelter. Continue beside the river to its source to reach the Hooker Glacier terminal lake.

## Warning

**Due to the mountainous nature of the Park, heavy snowfalls can occur at any time of the year. Contact the Visitor Centre for advice on conditions.**

Photo: Nick Groves